Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K)

Annual Report

2024-2025

Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

Office of Childhood Success at Every Stage

Introduction

In 2023, the Missouri Legislature passed House Bill 447 RSMo. 161.396 that established the Language Equity and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (Lead-K) Act. This Act required the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to develop resources for monitoring, tracking, and assessing the expressive and receptive language of children who are deaf and hard of hearing and create additional resources to understand and share the developmental stages toward American Sign Language (ASL) and English literacy. This Act also required DESE to establish an advisory committee to provide input on the resources and developmental milestones made available to parents. Finally, the Act requires an annual report that is specific to language and literacy development of children who are deaf and hard of hearing including, but not limited to, children who are deaf or hard of hearing and have other disabilities, from birth to 5 years of age relative to peers who are not deaf or hard of hearing.

Assessments

Throughout the year, DESE worked alongside Missouri State University to complete a LEAD-K Needs Assessment. This Needs Assessment surveyed those who are most qualified to conduct language assessments of children who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH): Local Education Agencies (LEAs), teachers of the DHH (TOD) who are enrolled as First Steps service providers (also known as Special Instructors – Hearing Impairment [SI HI]), and speech language pathologists (SLP) who are enrolled as First Steps service providers.

The Needs Assessment's goal was to determine how services are provided to children who are deaf and hard of hearing. The Needs Assessment also looked at what tools or assessments are currently being used to assess the language and literacy development of children who are deaf and hard of hearing. In addition, the Needs Assessment gathered information on resources First Steps (FS) and LEA providers need, such as assistive technology, learning materials, and professional development to support children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

The table below shows the list of 18 language assessment tools included in the Needs Assessment. The assessment tools listed on the Needs Assessment were derived from recommendations by three different resources: the LEAD-K advisory committee, the Gallaudet National Beacon Center, and the Outcomes and Developmental Data Assistance Center for Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs.

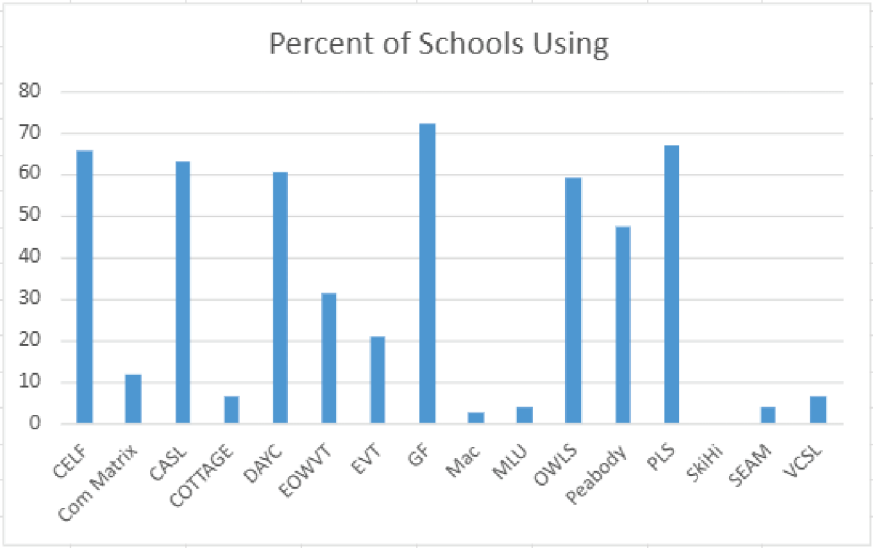
Language Assessment Tools

ASL Expressive Skills Test
ASL Receptive Skills Test
Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals Preschool (CELF P)
Communication Matrix
Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language (CASL- 2)
Cottage Acquisition Scales for Listening, Language and Speech (CASLLS)
Developmental Assessment of Young Children (DAY C-2)
Expressive One-Word Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT)
Expressive Vocabulary Test (ECT-3)
Goldman Fristoe Test of Articulation
MacArthur Bates CDI
MLU Brown Markers
Oral and Written Language Scales (OWLS)
Preschool Language Scales (PLS-5)
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test
SKI HI Language Development Scale
Social Emotional Assessment/Evaluation Measure (SEAM)
Visual Communication and Sign Language Checklist

Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

The data below summarizes the LEAs who responded to the survey. The LEAs report serving 108 students are DHH. 25 of 84 (30%) reporting LEAs reported serving students who are DHH.

Provider Type	Number of Reponses	Number of LEAS responded serving children who were deaf and hard of hearing	LEAS participating in a Special Education CO-OP	Number of LEAs who contract with another LEA for services	Contracted with an approved agency
LEAs	84	25	9	4	9

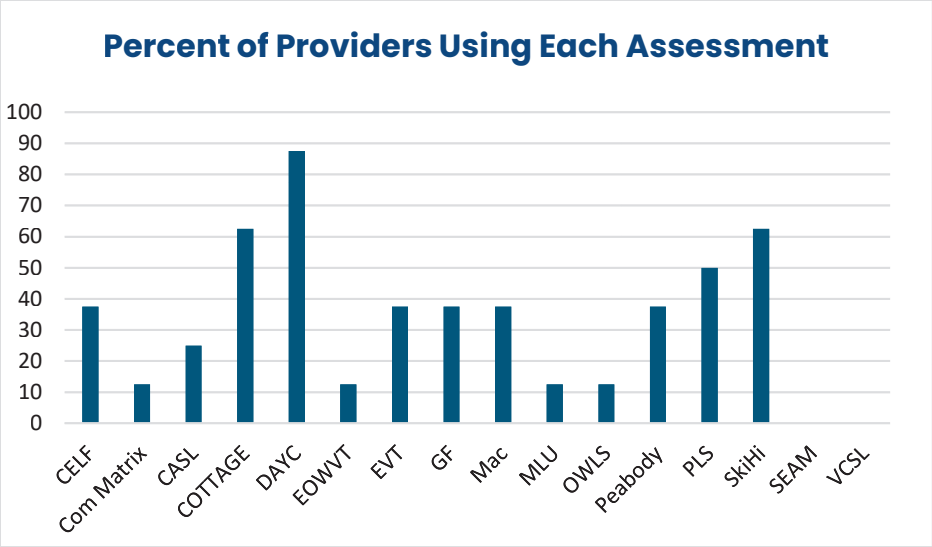


The majority of responding LEAs own or have access to a language assessment tool that is appropriate for use with students who are DHH. At 60%, the DAYC is the most common tool among all LEAs. LEAs reported needing more information on LEAD-K and resources including staffing to include TOD/SI HIs and interpreters, resources for students who are deaf/blind or have additional disabilities, resources for literacy, professional training, assistive technology like Functional Modulation (FM)systems, and functional listening tools.

Specialized Instructors-Hearing/Teachers of the Deaf (SI-H/TOD)

The data below summarizes the Specialized Instructors-Hearing/Teachers of the Deaf (SI-H/TOD) who are enrolled as First Steps service providers. The reporting providers serve a total of 167 children who are DHH.

Provider Type	Number of Respondents	Independent Providers	Employed by a School for the Deaf
SI-H/TOD	34	10	24



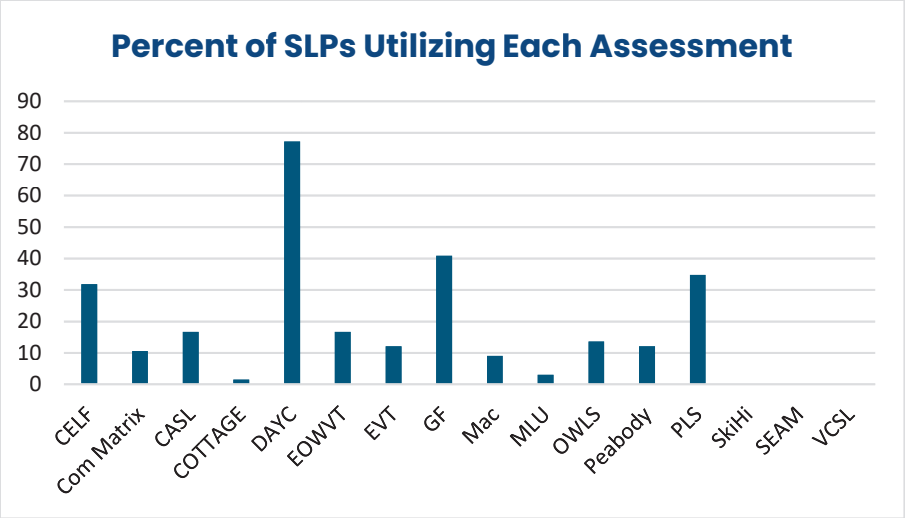
SI-H/TOD use a greater variety of language assessment tools as compared to those used by LEAs. The Developmental Assessment of Young Children (DAY C) is utilized by 90% of SI-H/TOD providers. SI-H/TOD utilized two additional tests that LEAs did not often own or have access to – the MacArthur Bates CDI and Ski Hi.

SI-H/TOD providers were asked about frequency of language assessments and the tools used. All SI-H/TOD providers assess both expressive and receptive language by 12 months of age with the exception of one school which assesses both at 18 months. All providers use at least one assessment tool that appears on the chart above. SI-H/TOD providers expressed a need for in depth assessment tools, parent support tools, highly skilled professionals, professional development, and costs of implementing to districts and families.

Speech Language Pathologists (SLP)

Speech Language Pathologists that responded were First Steps providers serving in 66 counties. Twenty-two of the 66 SLPs (33%) that completed the survey reported that they are currently serving DHH children. The total number of children served (by 22 SLPS) was 38.

Provider Type	Number of Respondents	SLP	SLP-Assistants
SLPs	66	64	2



Fifty-three of the reporting SLPs reported that they assess both receptive and expressive language of 1-year olds and younger. Six reported assessing at 15 to 18 months of age. The most common concerns involved the availability of training for professionals and the availability of resources for both professionals and parents.

Data Collection

To help ensure the accuracy of LEAD-K data, the DESE needed to capture the number of children diagnosed with a hearing impairment. In 2024, an additional field was created in the Missouri Student Information System (MOSIS) data system where LEAs enter child level data on a cyclical basis. Prior to 2025, only primary disability categories were tracked in the MOSIS system which limited the ability to capture all children who may have multiple diagnosis including DHH. This data will be available in Year 2.

Early Childhood Outcome Data

Each year, DESE is to track the language and literacy development of children who are deaf or hard of hearing using data reported in the State Performance Plan (SPP), Indicator 7 Early Childhood Outcomes. The SPP provides information on a series of special education indicators that measures the states and each LEA's service sand results for students with disabilities.

Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) are measured for all children receiving FS or Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services. ECO outcome data is used to analyze the language and literacy development for children who are deaf and hard of hearing as those skills are woven throughout the following three outcomes.

- Outcome 1: Positive Social-Emotional Skills includes important skills such as relating to caregivers, interacting with peers, communicating with others, and expressing own emotions and responding to emotions of others.
- Outcome 2: Acquisition and Use of Knowledge and Skills includes understanding pre-academics and literacy, acquiring language to communicate, and understand questions asked and directions given.

- Outcome 3: Use of Appropriate Behaviors to Meet Needs includes things such as communicating needs.

ECO ratings are determined for each child entering and exiting either FS or ECSE. Each child is assigned a rating of 1-5 for each of the three outcome areas. Outcome progress looks at the difference between entry and exit ratings. The outcome progress is then summarized into two statements.

Summary Statements:

Summary Statement 1: the percent of children who substantially increased their rate of growth while in FS or ECSE.

Summary Statement 2: the percent of children who were functioning within age expectations when they left FS or ECSE.

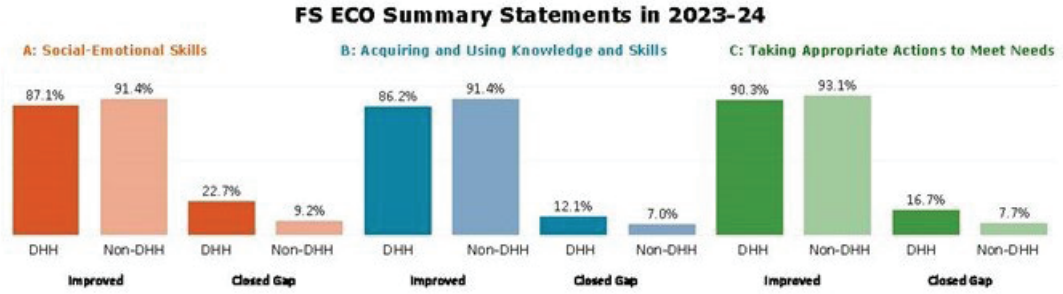
Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) in 2023-24: First Steps (FS) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

ECO Process: Each child is assigned a rating of 1-5 for each of the three outcome areas at entry to and exit from FS or ECSE program. Outcome progress looks at the differences between entry and exit ratings. The outcome progress is then summarized into two statements.

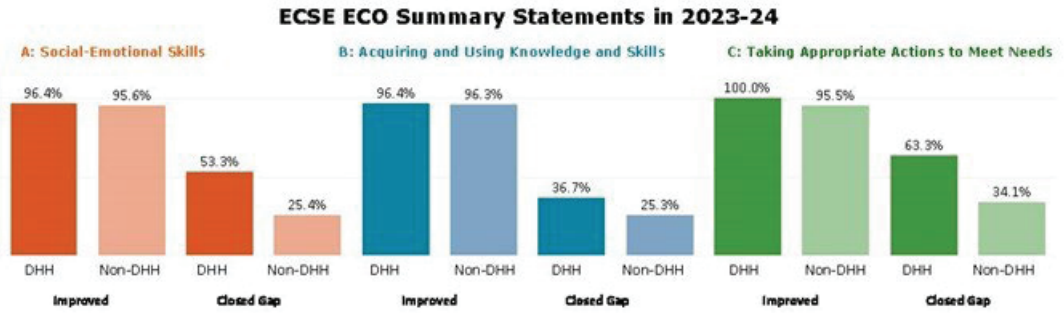
ECO Summary Statements: The State Performance Plan includes two Summary Statements that describe the progress made by children in FS or ECSE.

*Summary Statement 1 is the percent of children who substantially increased their rate of growth while in FS or ECSE. This is referred to as **"Improved"** in the charts below.

*Summary Statement 2 is the percent of children who were functioning within age expectations when they left FS or ECSE. This is referred to as **"Closed Gap"** in the charts below.



Note: Number of FS children with DHH is 66 and number of FS children without DHH is 5,023. All children who are deaf or hard of hearing were included.



Note: Number of ECSE children with DHH is 30 and number of ECSE children without DHH is 4,766. Children with DHH as a primary disability were included therefore data do not reflect all children with DHH.

For children enrolled in First Steps (birth-3) and identified as Deaf and Hard of Hearing, their rate of improvement in each of the three ECO areas was slightly lower. While their closed gap or percentage of children functioning at age expectation was slightly higher.

For children enrolled in ECSE (age 3-5) and identified as Deaf and Hard of Hearing, their rate of improvement was at or slightly higher than those who are not Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Their closed gap or exiting at age expectation percentages were higher than those who are not Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Resources

As required, DESE made various resources available that support language acquisition for children who are deaf and hard of hearing. ASL developmental milestones and other resources are available on the Early Connections webpage. Other resources include, but not limited to, national Lead-K information connecting families to information and resources, Missouri Lead-K ASL/English Milestones and Checklist, LEAD-K assessment information including a list of proposed assessments.

Resources can be found **on the LEAD-K website**.

Conclusion

In Year 1, Missouri made various resources available, including Milestones for ASL and Spoken English, parent resources, Deaf and Blind Resources and education resources. ECO data reviewed showed that children who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) are progressing at the same or similar rates to those children who are not DHH. In Year 2, Missouri will work alongside contractors to continue to increase assessments and resources available to SI-H/TOD, SLP, and LEAs to continue to increase outcomes.